

Maplewood PARKS & RECREATION SYSTEM PLAN Executive Summary

A great parks and recreation system



contributes to a great community

When people talk about the places they love in a city, parks are typically at the top of the list. Parks are sources of civic identity and pride and are also essential to the physical, economic, environmental, and social health of the City of Maplewood and its residents.

Today, the City of Maplewood has an enviable parks and recreation system. The system is known for its leadership in sustainability and diverse recreation options. Fifty parks and preserves anchor neighborhoods and provide places for community gathering, athletics, and respite, while the community center and the nature center are hubs for programs.

However, the parks and recreation system is transitioning from a developing system to a mature system, which is presenting new challenges. At the core of future issues is the need for extensive park revitalization and reinvestment. System-wide replacement of aging park facilities such as playgrounds, courts, fields, shelters, and signage is

needed. In addition, significant reinvestment in the Community Center, Nature Center, and park activity buildings is needed.

Updating recreation offerings so the system remains fresh, exciting and relevant in light of changing demographic and recreation trends is also important. Trails are currently high demand facilities that appeal to all ages; climate change and environmental awareness are making sustainability more important than ever before; a more diverse population is creating demand for culturally relevant activities; public expectations for high quality city facilities have steadily risen over time.

It is an exciting time for Maplewood's parks and recreation system. The strong foundation of parks, the imminent need for significant revitalization, and changing demographic and recreation trends offers the opportunity to reinvent the system for the next generation of Maplewood residents.

The purpose of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan is to guide reinvestment in and reinvention of the parks and recreation system for the next generation of Maplewood residents

The Master Plan identifies 47 recommendations and associated strategies. Recommendations do not include every possible action, but highlight those needed to achieve the future vision.

Plan recommendations are organized into 5 topic areas:

- parks and recreation facilities
- trails
- natural areas and greenways
- programs
- arts and culture



Vision for Parks and Recreation

To help create a vibrant community that embraces diversity, celebrates arts and culture, values health and wellness, and promotes stewardship of the environment

Guiding Principles



Safe and Welcoming Parks



Connect People and Places



Encourage Health and Wellness



Promote Environmental Stewardship



Inspire Creativity and learning



Financial Sustainability

COMMUNITY INPUT

A goal of the planning process was to ensure that the plan reflects resident's vision for parks and recreation. To that end, over 800 residents participated in the process during 2013-2014. Community input included:

- Guidance from a Parks and Recreation Task Force made up of community members and elected officials who met 16 times during the process
- A statistically valid city-wide parks needs assessment survey
- On-line input
- Eleven community open houses
- Outreach to teens
- Focus group meetings with topics on arts and culture, environment and natural resources, and athletics
- Business community outreach
- Input from the Parks and Recreation Commission and City Council

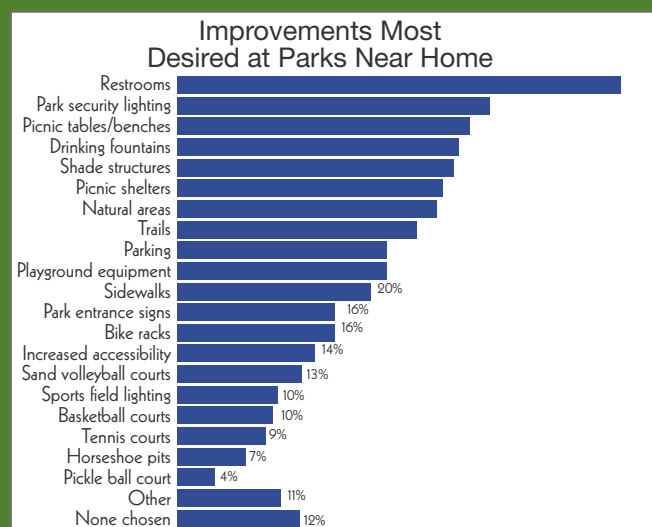


PARKS & RECREATION CITIZEN SURVEY

To inform the master plan a statically valid survey was conducted during the winter of 2014. The survey gauged residents' attitudes towards supporting improvements to the parks and recreation system with tax dollars.

KEY FINDINGS:

- 70% of households have visited parks and preserves in the last 12 months.
- Walking, hiking and biking trails are the most used amenity (86%). After trails, neighborhood parks are the most needed (61%).
- Residents have unmet needs for a wide variety of parks, facilities, and activities.
- Developing a new large destination park with city-wide amenities is the most important major addition to the system.
- Most of any additional funding should go to improvements to existing parks, preserves, and trails.
- 34% of respondents would vote in favor of a tax to fund the types of projects most important to their household over the next 10 years.

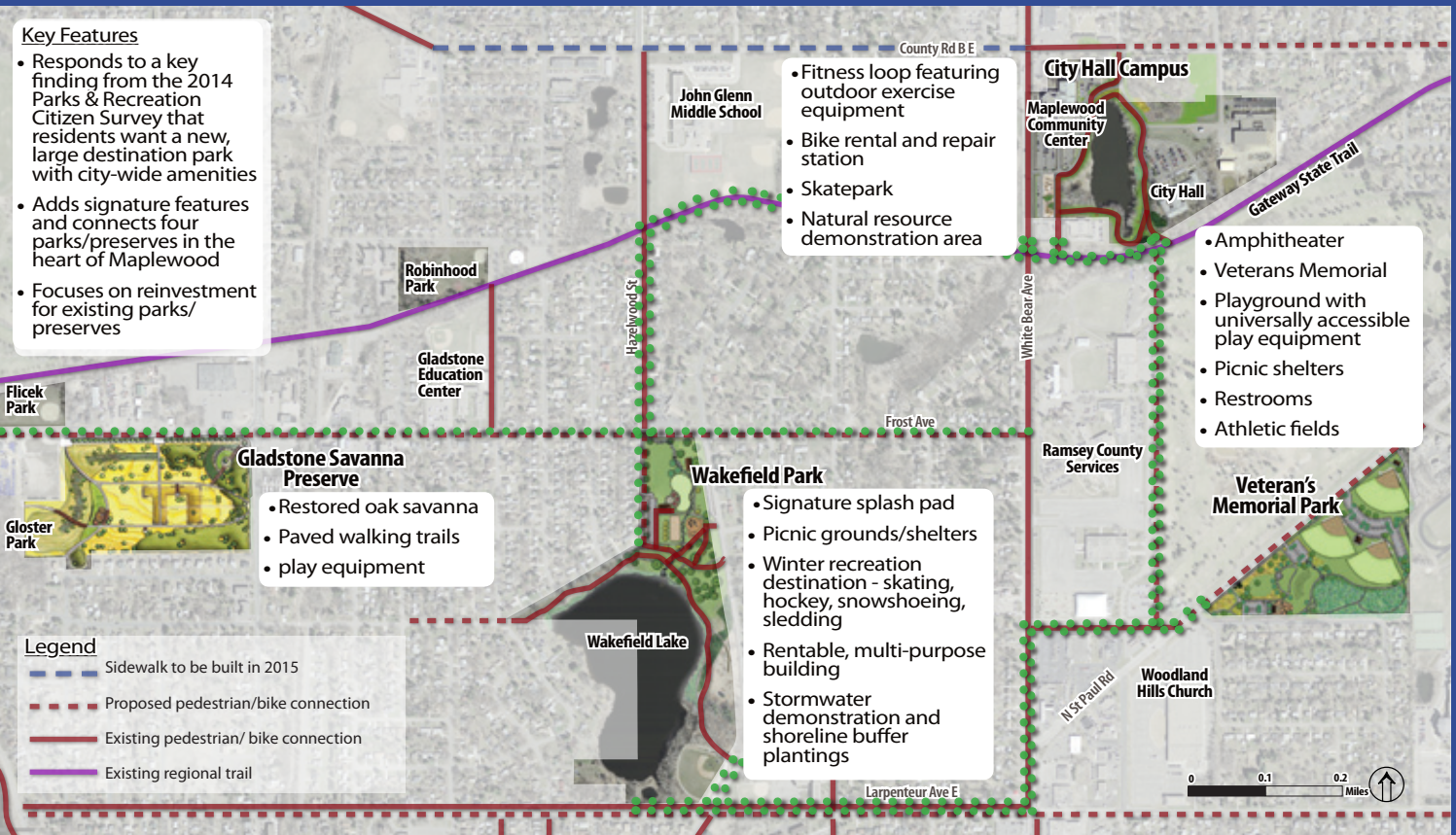


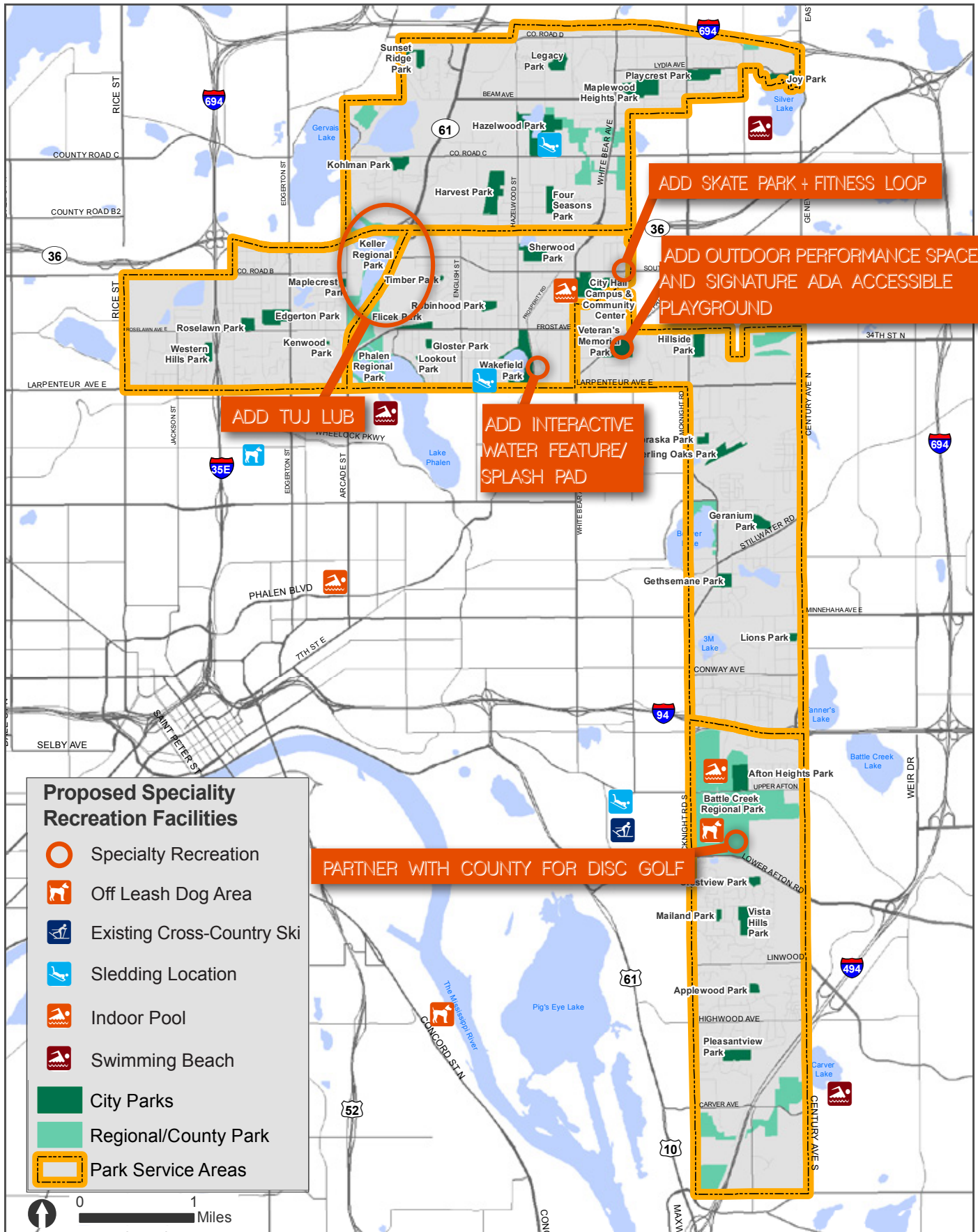
Parks and Recreation Facilities

- ✓ Taking care of the existing system is the highest community priority. This means reinvesting in and upgrading parks and facilities. Essential is creation and implementation of an asset management plan. This will allow the City to anticipate and prioritize replacement of recreation facilities at the end of their functional life-cycle.
- ✓ Improving basic amenities such as restrooms in community parks and providing shade, benches, and updated signage in all parks is important for creating welcoming parks.
- ✓ Updating the recreation facility mix to reflect community interests is of utmost importance. Community gardens, a tuj lub court, pickleball, and adding a disc golf course are all examples of newer recreation facilities desired by residents.

SIGNATURE PARKS CONCEPT

Ensuring that high quality, signature parks are located throughout the city is an important goal for the future. The western and southern portions of the city are already well served by Phalen-Keller Regional Park and Battle Creek Regional Park. To provide signature recreation in the central portion of the city, re-investment in three centrally-located parks and one preserve and linking them with trails is recommended. Together, Wakefield Park, Veteran's Memorial Park, Gladstone Savanna Community Preserve, and the City Hall Campus will provide a range of community activities. Each park, however, will retain its own character and have unique focus. Art and sustainable design, construction, and maintenance practices will be integrated throughout.





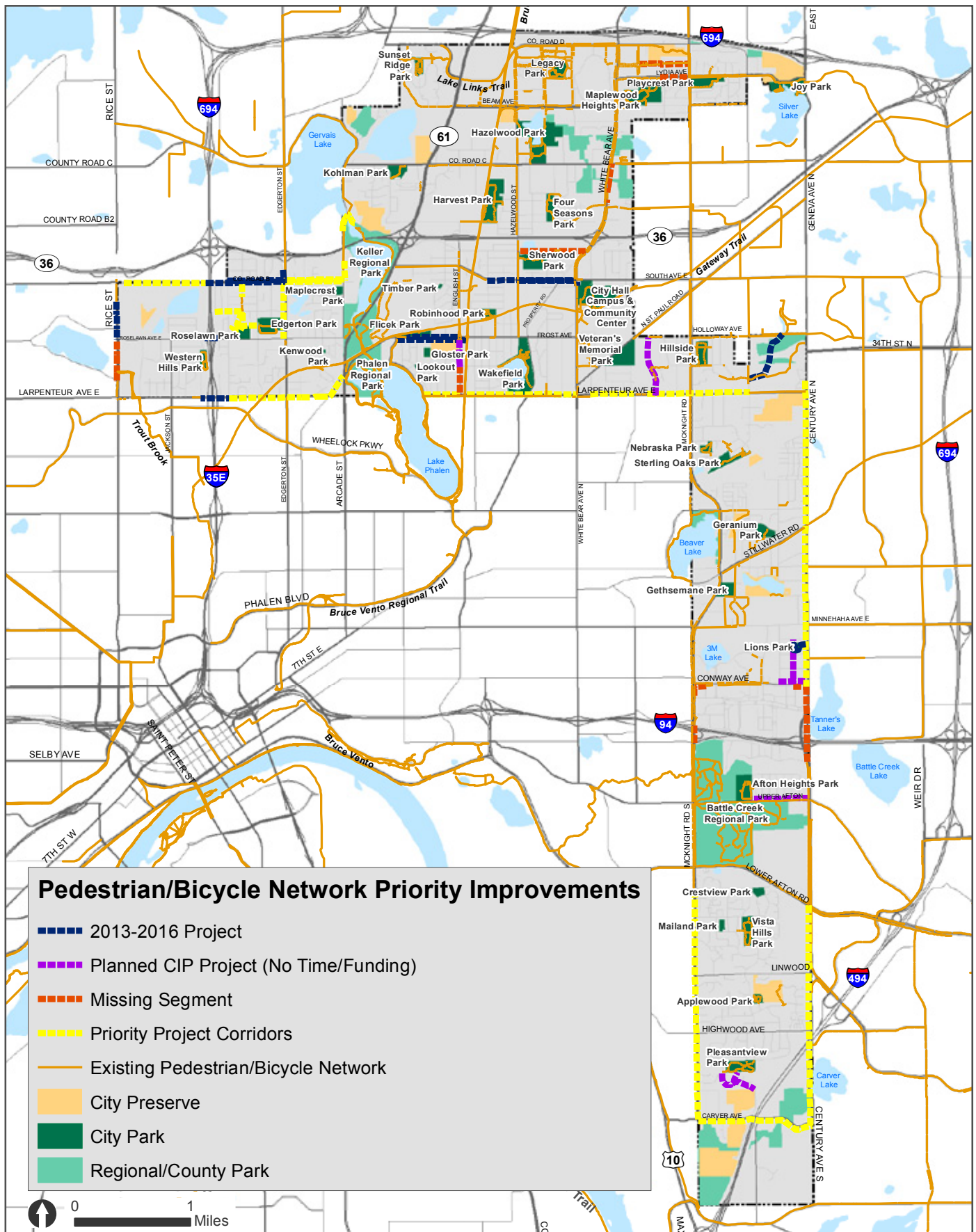
Trails

- ✓ The popularity of trail based activities such as walking and biking continues to grow. Trails bring the park system closer to every resident, offer transportation alternatives, and support a healthy, active population.
- ✓ The Master Plan recommends continuing to develop a priority network of north-south and east-west connections throughout the community as well as enhancing connections beyond Maplewood. Priority projects will make the existing system more functional by completing missing segments.



The Nature Center, Natural Areas, and Greenways

- ✓ Maplewood residents place a high value on environmental health. The Parks and Recreation and Public Works Departments will continue to exemplify environmental leadership through education, demonstration, design, maintenance and operations in parks and preserves.
- ✓ The city's 15 preserves will continue to be the foundation of the protected open space network. These areas will be the focus of habitat restoration and natural resource management efforts while allowing for some passive recreation.
- ✓ The Nature Center will continue to be the community hub for environmental stewardship and nature-based programming.



Arts and Culture

- ✓ The arts enhance livability, bring diverse groups of people together, celebrate history and heritage, contribute to economic vitality, enhance learning in classrooms, raise awareness of environmental and social concerns, and bring beauty and meaning to the built environment.
- ✓ Maplewood's arts and cultural programming will grow and evolve organically over time. The City will build on and expand its partnerships to foster arts, look to develop arts programs, and integrate arts into infrastructure such as buildings, bridges, and picnic shelters.

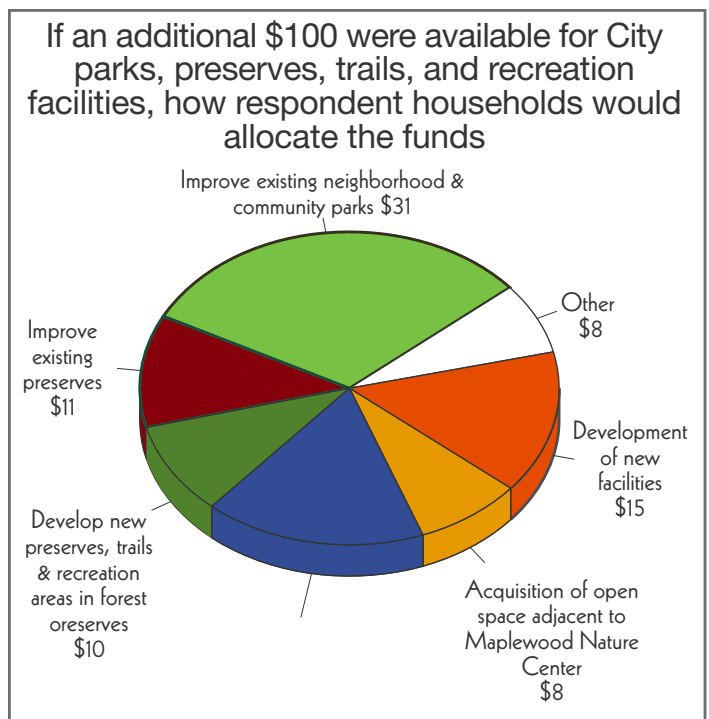


Programs

- ✓ The need for recreation is an essential component of a healthy, vital community. Recreation programs are pursued for enjoyment, health, skill development, enrichment, socialization, entertainment, physical fitness, and relaxation. Dynamic recreation and demographic trends mean programs need to constantly evolve.
- ✓ It is an exciting time for programs in Maplewood. Future recommendations focus on community-building events like 5K runs and concerts, updating multipurpose buildings in parks to bring more programs to neighborhoods, and emphasizing outreach to diverse population groups.

Implementation

Realizing Maplewood's vision for parks and recreation will take time, dedication, and additional funding. The City already invests significantly in parks and recreation for both new capital projects and ongoing operations and maintenance. Funding for the system comes from a variety of sources including allocation from the general fund, grants, partnerships, and volunteers. Adequately allocating financial resources for park system reinvestment and reinvention will be essential to realizing plan recommendations. Improvements will not occur overnight, but will be phased over time, dependent on available funding and staff time.



Source: 2014 Parks & Recreation Citizen Survey

Benefits of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan

- ✓ Road map for system revitalization
- ✓ A more connected city
- ✓ Defensible rationale for decision-making
- ✓ Continued access to nature
- ✓ Strategic resource allocation (budgeting and staffing)
- ✓ More relevant programs
- ✓ Fosters strong partnerships
- ✓ Integration of the arts into the park system
- ✓ Safe and welcoming parks
- ✓ Long-term economic sustainability
- ✓ An updated recreation facility mix

For More Information

Please contact the Maplewood Parks Recreation Department

651.249.2120

DECEMBER
2014

MAPLEWOOD PARKS & RECREATION



Creating Community Through People, Parks and Programs